

WHY THE WCD?

Charles County’s new Comprehensive Plan, adopted in July of 2016, includes a Watershed Conservation District (WCD) that would allow only one housing unit per 20 acres. The WCD is designed to curtail the sprawl development that is harming Mattawoman Creek and the headwaters of the Port Tobacco River, clogging our roads, and overcrowding schools. With less new sprawl, this district will do much to sustain the county’s quality of life and rural character cherished by residents. However, SGACC believes that a provision allowing for the creation of lots for children within a family-owned parcel should be added to the language establishing the WCD.

But the development industry is working hard to defeat the rezoning, because it wants to build over 17,000 new housing units in just a portion of the district. To further its ends, it is spreading misinformation about allowed uses in the WCD, for instance, telling landowners that their property values will go down and they cannot build if they own less than 20 acres—both falsehoods.

Here are some of the things that the WCD will accomplish:

- Help rein in costly sprawl development
- Improve home values by reducing competition *and* conserving green space
- Stabilize property taxes by avoiding public subsidies for sprawl development
- Reduce the County’s growth rate
- Reduce the growth of congestion on commuter routes 210 and 301, and on 228
- Alleviate school overcrowding



Map showing the WCD from the Mattawoman Watershed Society website

**SMARTER GROWTH ALLIANCE
FOR CHARLES COUNTY**

- 1000 Friends of Maryland
- AMP Creeks Council
- Audubon MD-DC
- Chapman Forest Foundation
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Clean Water Action
- Coalition for Smarter Growth
- Conservancy for Charles County
- Maryland Bass Nation
- Maryland Conservation Council
- Maryland League of Conservation Voters
- Maryland Native Plant Society
- Mattawoman Watershed Society
- Nanjemoy-Potomac Environmental Coalition
- Nanjemoy Vision, Inc.
- Potomac River Association
- Potomac Riverkeeper Network
- Sierra Club, Maryland Chapter
- Sierra Club, Southern Maryland Group
- St. Mary’s River Watershed Association

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- Keep Mattawoman Creek from exceeding the “tipping point” for irreversible loss
- Conserve important headwaters of the Port Tobacco River like Page’s Swamp
- Prevent ill-conceived projects like Guilford (see separate story)

If the WCD is protected, as laid out in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, it will continue to provide millions of dollars in natural services because forests clean the air and water, improve property values, and provide ecosystem services such as stormwater and flood management. The

Maryland Department of the Environment predicts that these services amount to more than *\$90 million per year* in the Watershed Conservation District—services that will disappear if the development lobby gets its way.

Please send an email to Theresa Pickering at pickerTh@charlescountymd.gov expressing support for the WCD. The comment period closes COB February 13, and the Planning Commission has a work session on March 13, which may take more than one night, before scheduling a vote.

TESTIMONY RE WCD AT THE PLANNING COMMISSION

My name is Nancy Smart, and my husband and I own, operate, and live on a 30-acre horse farm on Bumpy Oak Road—inside the Watershed Conservation District. Before the first public hearing on the WCD, we received a letter in the mail warning us that the 20-acre per lot zoning in the WCD threatens our property rights. Although the letter was unsigned, it doesn’t take much imagination to conclude that it was sent by people interested in developing our property and other large parcels to enrich themselves—not by those concerned about our financial well-being.

I believe there are other, more important, issues at stake. Minimum 20-acre lots in the WCD preserve precious open space, protect the Mattawoman Creek and the headwaters of the Port Tobacco River—and may even enhance property values. Research shows that some, but not all, large lots are actually more valuable per acre than small ones, because many people value the privacy and space they afford. I moved to our farm in 1968 because I wanted a place to keep my horses, ride them through the woods without having to trailer them, have a large vegetable garden, and raise my family in the country. Now, my husband and I look forward to living out our lives on the farm, without being surrounded by sprawl.

Also, sprawl development, such as would result from small lots in the WCD, costs all taxpayers because it does not pay for itself. Twenty acre zoning means we taxpayers won’t have to pay for infrastructure such as schools and school busses, police, fire fighting, roads, and more.

I therefore support the WCD zoning designation as shown on the proposed map, and urge you to approve it.

UPCOMING EVENTS

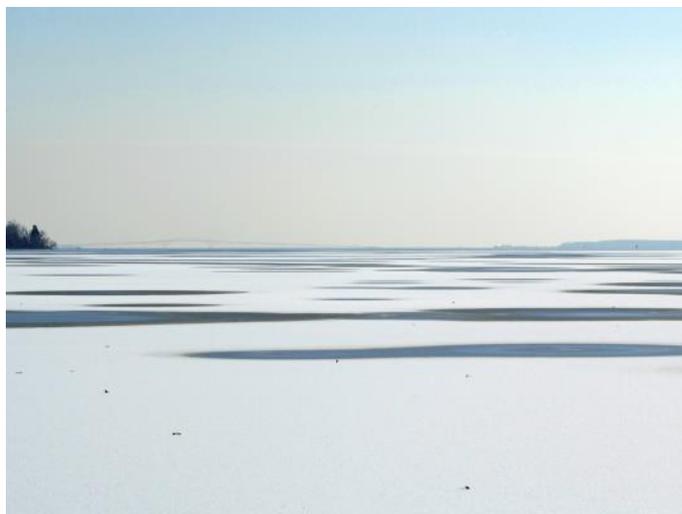
Monday, February 13—WCD comment period ends.

Wednesday, February 15—Commissioner Ken Robinson will hold a town hall meeting at 6pm at the Charles County Government Building in La Plata.

Tuesday, March 7—Public meeting on the designation of Mallows Bay as a National Marine Sanctuary at 6–9pm in the Charles County Government Building in La Plata.

Thursday, March 9—Public meeting on designation of Mallows Bay as a National Marine Sanctuary at 6–9pm at Anne Arundel Community College, Center for Applied Learning and Technology Building, 101 College Parkway, Arnold, MD.

Friday, March 31—Mallows Bay comment period closes.



Winter view of the Port Tobacco River

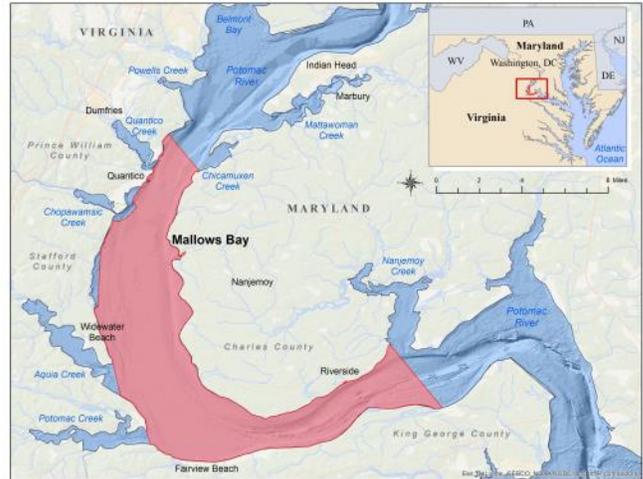
MALLOWS BAY UPDATE

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will hold two public hearings in March on its detailed analysis of a proposed national marine sanctuary to protect Mallows Bay-Potomac River. The area is a maritime heritage resource in Charles County, about 40 miles south of Washington, DC, that is seen as a source of increased tourism, and tourists' dollars, to the county.

Mallows Bay is home to nearly 200 known shipwrecks dating back to the Civil War, as well as archaeological artifacts dating back 12,000 years. NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary program has developed four alternatives for the Mallows Bay sanctuary, from Alternative A, which would not designate a sanctuary, to Alternative D, which would run from Indian Head south to Pope's Creek, covering approximately 100 square miles. Their preferred alternative is C, shown on the map, which would cover 52 square miles.

Sammy Orlando, a spokesman for the national sanctuary program, was quoted recently in the *Maryland Independent* as offering reassurances that all recreational uses of the land will remain as currently permitted.

The State of Maryland nominated the site to be a National Marine Sanctuary in September 2014. A diverse collection



of organizations and individuals at local, state, regional, and national levels have endorsed the proposal.

The public hearings will be held at the Charles County Government building in La Plata from 6 to 9 pm on March 7 and at Anne Arundel Community College in Arnold from 6 to 9pm on March 9. You can also email comments, which must be received by March 31, via the Federal eRulemaking Portal. For more information, check out sanctuaries.noaa.gov/mallows-bay

WALDORF STATION

Greenberg Gibbons, an Owings Mills-based award-winning developer specializing in mixed-use, town center and retail properties, has acquired Chaney Enterprises' Waldorf Station project for \$8.5 million. Greenberg Gibbons already has numerous developments under its belt, including the Annapolis Towne Centre and Waugh Chapel Towne Centre in Gambrills. Its projects attract high-end groceries such as Wegmans, Whole Foods, and Harris Teeter, and there's hope that the same will happen here in Charles County.



Greenberg Gibbons Waugh Chapel Towne Centre development. Photo from Greenberg Gibbons website

The 144-acre property is at U.S. Route 301 at the Prince George's County line. Chaney put the property up for sale in July, after negotiations between it and Walmart, which would have led to a 194,000-square foot Supercenter, fell through.

Because of its location, two major unresolved problems persist with Waldorf Station. One of these is traffic. Concentrating high-demand retail next to a U.S. Route 301 traffic chokepoint will add to the area's already worsening traffic woes, especially during evening rush hour and weekend shopping. Second, the project is adjacent to Mattawoman Creek. No matter how well stormwater catchment is designed, introducing impervious surfaces from roof, road, and parking lot from an additional 500,000 square feet of commercial space, plus 700 apartments and 100 townhomes, can only have negative impacts on the creek.

One key to making this high-visibility gateway project a success will be how these problems are addressed and resolved.

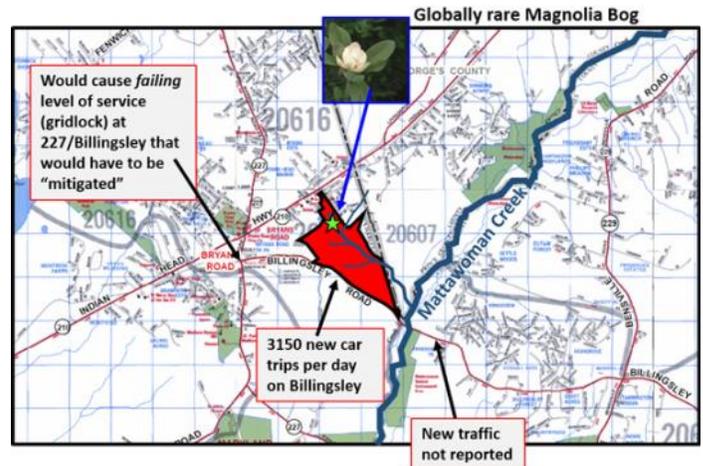
GOOD NEWS—GUILFORD APPROVAL OVERTURNED!

Last November, the Charles County Board of Appeals unanimously overturned the Planning Commission's approval of a huge subdivision known as Guilford that was proposed for Bryan's Road. The approval had been challenged by adjoining residents and two member groups with SGACC.

Stretching for nearly a mile along Billingsley Road, Guilford involved 438 housing units, including 140 apartments. It was sited on 183 forested acres that drain



Guilford site, photo from the Mattawoman Watershed Society website



Map showing the Guilford site, from the Mattawoman Watershed Society website

into Mattawoman Creek and contain a globally rare wetland known as a magnolia bog.

Among the reasons for the Board of Appeals' action were the rejection of public input in the original decision and significant impacts on traffic and safety that were ignored in an inadequate public facilities analysis. It was estimated that the subdivision would have caused a 60% increase in traffic on Billingsley Road, a dangerous, narrow road that was once cited as a reason to build the failed Cross County Connector. In addition, children from the subdivision would have attended J.C. Parks Elementary School and Matthew Henson Middle School, both of which are already overcrowded, with children attending classes in trailers. Such a project could not be proposed today because it is within the Watershed Conservation District.



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